Resolution 1 – 2018 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly
Resolution in Commitment to More Fully Embracing the Reconciling in Christ Identity of the Greater Milwaukee Synod

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WHEREAS, The Greater Milwaukee Synod (GMS), since 1991, has identified itself as a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) synod and committed to the work of “equality and full inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” as stated on the GMS webpage; and

WHEREAS, In the resolution passed at the 1998 Synod Assembly, the congregations of the GMS “adopted a time limit of six months from [that] date whereby all individual congregations [would] report in writing and identify to the bishop and synod council the procedure that they [would] procure for their respective congregations to address the issue of becoming a ‘Reconcil[ing] in Christ’ congregation”; and

WHEREAS, In the 20 years since adopting the 1998 resolution addressing the issue of individual congregations becoming RIC, only 18 additional congregations, for a total of 24 of the 122 congregations within the GMS, plus the two Lutheran Campus Ministries have completed the process of becoming RIC; and

WHEREAS, With GMS staff citing compliance with the social statement on "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" adopted at the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, GMS congregations in transition who claim “bound conscience” are allowed to deny the paperwork of and interviews with rostered leaders in the call process who openly identify as LGBTQIA+, based on their sexual/gender identities; and

WHEREAS, The GMS constitution clearly commits “to participate in God’s mission” by manifesting “the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives” (S6.02.f); and

WHEREAS, Encouraged in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians “to lead a life worthy of the calling to which [we] have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”; be it

RESOLVED, That the 24 RIC congregations and two Lutheran Campus Ministries within the GMS be encouraged to play an active role in representing and living out their RIC identity within the Synod by participating on the Reconciling In Christ Ministry Team and, with the GMS staff, GMS council, and RIC Ministry Team, journeying with willing congregations who are not yet RIC through conversations, trainings, and the RIC process; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the GMS staff and council annually identify congregations who are not RIC in order to invite these congregations into recurring conversations with the GMS staff about their congregational identity and the identity of the GMS as RIC; and be it further

RESOLVED, That GMS staff and council members, in consultation with the RIC Ministry Team, participate in training by a third party organization (such as ReconcilingWorks,

Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries, The Reformation Project) to confidently and competently engage in constructive conversations on topics such as “bound conscience,” LGBTQIA+ inclusion and affirmation within congregations, and accompanying LGBTQIA+ rostered leaders in their ministry; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the GMS staff, in consultation with the RIC Ministry Team, provide training and resources from a third party organization (such as ReconcilingWorks, Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries, The Reformation Project) for interim pastors in order to equip these leaders to facilitate conversations within congregations in transition on calling pastoral candidates to their faith community who may identify as LGBTQIA+; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the GMS council, in support the GMS’s identity as RIC, add a RIC financial line item to the 2020 synodical budget, the amount of which to be determined by the GMS council in dialogue with the RIC Ministry Team; and be it further

RESOLVED, That in consultation with the RIC Ministry Team, the GMS staff and council establish metrics with which to determine the progress of the efforts to embrace the synod’s identity as a RIC Synod, and that these statistics be intentionally assessed throughout the year and reported on at the 2019 Synod Assembly by the GMS RIC Ministry Team. The report may include: an increase to the number of RIC congregations within the GMS, training that has occurred for GMS staff, GMS council members, and interim pastors, intentional conversations with LGBTQIA+ rostered leaders and congregation members about their experiences within the GMS, and the work accomplished within congregations either by GMS staff, interim pastors, or RIC Ministry Team.

Submitted by Milwaukee Clusters 1 and 2

Co-sponsored by: Ascension Lutheran Church, Cross Lutheran Church, Hephatha Lutheran Church, Lake Park Lutheran Church, Reformation Lutheran Church, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, and The Village Church of Milwaukee; Kingo Lutheran Church, Shorewood; Grace Lutheran Church, Thiensville; and the Greater Milwaukee Synod Reconciling in Christ Ministry Team

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